

Betty McCollum makes case for Darfur Genocide Accountability Act

By Ladu Jada Gubek
Contributing Writer

On the 11th year anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) joined Representative Donald Payne (D-NJ), ranking member of the House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), in a briefing to address the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan. McCollum is a cosponsor of the Darfur Genocide Accountability Act (H.R. 1424), which will impose sanctions against perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide in Darfur.

"The world must take responsibility for failing to respond to that human tragedy," said McCollum. "People continue to die, The U.S. now has an obligation to rally the support of the world community and save



Congresswoman Betty McCollum
(MN-04)

the people of Darfur. This is not a political issue, it is a moral test of our humanity."

Six months after the United States called the atrocities occurring in Darfur genocide, the heinous acts of violence and the orchestrated humanitar-

ian crisis continue unabated. Since February 2003, some observers estimated that up to 300,000 people have been killed by violence, disease, and man-made famine, about 2 million people have been displaced internally, and at least 200,000 have fled the country. The only intervention has been an African Union force whose mandate does not include civilian protection.

The Darfur Genocide Accountability Act will do many things. It will provide protection to civilians; give President George W. Bush the authority to use force to protect civilians; recommend that the President utilize technology to detect, disrupt, and punish armed groups who target civilians; and give the President the authority to establish and enforce a no-fly zone. It will also call for the deployment of 10,000 troops to augment the African Union force; block the property and

MCCOLLUM:TURN to 6

MCCOLLUM

From 1

assets of government officials and militia leaders; and restrict the travel of senior officials and militia leaders, including diplomatic personnel at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, DC.

It will also demand immediate prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the atrocities in Darfur in an U.S.-proposed tribunal.

Over the past two years, the global community has been hearing more and more about the escalating civil war in Sudan, more specifically, in the nation's region referred to as Darfur. The

United Nations has called it, "The world's worst humanitarian crisis." The conflict lies between Sudan's two major ethnic groups, the Arabs and the black Africans, which include hundreds of ethnic divisions and language groups. There are as many as 90 African and Arab tribes and clans in Darfur alone.

For centuries, primarily black African farmers have been living in the area's lush highlands. The Fur, or "For," tribe dominated the region, giving it the name Darfur, meaning "Homeland of the Fur." More recently, nomadic Arab herders have been encroaching on these lands.

In February, 2003, the two main Black African rebel

groups—the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army got tired of the government unjustly favoring Arabs over Africans. In response, Arab gunmen on horses and camels, backed by bombers and helicopter gunships, have razed hundreds of black African villages.

Many believe that Sudan's

Arab Islamist government in Khartoum began to manipulate the region's ethnicity in the 1980s, pushing Arab tribes westward. Some have also accused the government of purposefully keeping the Darfur region undeveloped, impoverished, and generally ignored.